TRANSFORMING ACCESSIBILITY INTO INCLUSIVITY AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

Chico State has instituted campuswide initiatives that vastly improve accessibility of online materials and within classrooms to better support the diverse abilities of its community. These programs not only serve those who need them but have also increased overall awareness of the importance of inclusivity.

Giving all students — single parents, ESL learners, people with disabilities, and veterans, for example — the opportunity to learn the way that makes them more efficient is not just a Chico goal; it's a goal of our higher education system.

For many years, Chico State has supported accessibility and diversity efforts. This project — transforming accessibility into inclusivity — builds on that foundation and has transformed into a full student success initiative, aligning with the goals of the California State University's Graduation Initiative 2025 to increase graduation rates for all CSU students while eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps.

Creating inclusivity at Chico State is all about improving the accessibility of online materials, in the classroom or on the web, for all. For too long, campuses have only remediated/fixed content for students with disabilities. A collaboration at Chico State saw an opportunity to change that process by leveraging software tools, like ALLY from Blackboard and Reach from Kaltura.

This project started as a collaboration between Student Affairs and Information Resources with approval from executive leadership. It has since picked up many partners on the Chico State campus. An example of this collaboration is the tools put in place by Information Resources staff for automated captioning, formerly manual process, which reduced the manual task time by 25 percent and made the process more efficient.

Students may now absorb content in the way in which they prefer. The project has also created efficiencies that allow the university to acquire more materials than before that are appropriate for students with varying abilities who need them versus, for example, remediating documents. Faculty is also now trained in areas such as remediating their own Word and PowerPoint documents, which comes with the added bonus of creating culture change.

MILESTONES

Jun 1 2017
- Successful implementation of ALLY for phase 1 testing

Oct 10 2017
- Demonstration to Academic Senate and Senior Leadership

Dec 8 2017
- Impact assessment and self-audit complete and demonstrates the impact these tools have on reducing the manual workload

Feb 1 2018
- Blackboard and Kaltura work findings published

Mar 1 2018
- Chico State hosts ALLY team, and event is attended by representatives from CSU and CCC campuses

May 1 2018
- Website, training materials, resources and a facilitator's guide are developed for fall 2018 full-product launch

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

Institutional report: This report provides results of a scan on campus learning management software's accessibility/inclusivity level. From a baseline, the accessibility/inclusivity level increased by 13 percent in 12 months. Only two of those months were during full integration, which is a good sign moving forward.

Campus culture: Year over year, 220 percent more service tickets were received for information and service directly related to accessibility.

Increased efficiency: The Office of Accessible Technology and Services acquired 30 percent more materials then last year with the aid of automated tools.

Senior leadership involvement: The president and vice presidents are actively engaging in accessibility/inclusivity conversations.

Sharing and consultation: Members of the Chico State Information Resources team have become campus consultants for the CSU-wide ALLY project and are active in helping colleagues in the University of California and California Community Colleges systems.

Recognition: The program received the Inclusion Award from BBWORLD 2018; articles have been published about this initiative, and the project has been nationally recognized many times over.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS

- The impact on the campus community is immeasurable in data but felt every day in collaboration.

- Streamlining the process has eased the fears of faculty when making content more inclusive.

- The launch of this huge initiative with little reported negative feedback has given senior leadership reason to continue investing in inclusivity-related software tools and services.

- There has been excitement among students who see what is now available to them.

- User sessions have been held with more than 1,400 students, and the consensus has been that Chico is providing an environment where students feel they are getting the tools they need to succeed.

PROJECT TEAM

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LESSONS LEARNED

1 A project this large requires collaboration to ensure success, and strong partnerships help diminish potential roadblocks.

2 Executive support remains the biggest component to a successful project. Make sure to include the academic community on major changes and information. The faculty are very important and have many great ideas to contribute to projects.

3 A survey is important to make sure the program and its many facets remain effective and are constantly evolving.

4 Check egos at the door when it comes to project such as this one. The project is successful when we look out for each other and not for ourselves, keeping in mind that everyone is here to create a welcoming and positive environment for the community.

The Office of Accessible Technology and Services team.